1 *Patronage in Asian Political Systems*
A Framework for Research

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Most scholars thinking and writing about employment in the public sector begin with a normative model based on a career, nonpartisan civil service (Dahlström and Lapuente, 2017). The same bias toward civil service is shared by international organizations, and their commitment is perhaps even stronger as they make grants contingent on administrative reforms. This notion of the career civil servant is a very old one, going back to the mandarins in China, but despite its antiquity, it remains the model for the public bureaucracy today, even though the degree to which countries have achieved this ideal varies markedly (Kopecký et al., 2016).

The model of the career civil service is justified by the assumption that a career civil service will serve any government with loyalty and expertise. A good civil servant is expected to be able to serve any political "master" and to be loyal to the government of the day, as well as to the State. Likewise, civil servants are hired for their abilities, as demonstrated by formal testing and qualifications, and expected to be knowledgeable in specific policy domains, as well as in the processes of governing more generally. Being a civil servant is a career, and over time in that career, the individual civil servant gains experience and greater knowledge, and a greater capacity to assist political leaders in governing.

The above is the textbook justification for the existence of a career in civil service, and in many cases, this idealized vision of the civil servant is a reasonably accurate depiction of practice. But many politicians in industrialized democracies do not consider the civil service in quite such positive terms (see Bauer and Becker, 2020). These politicians see the civil service as an entrenched elite that has its own views on policy and attempts to thwart the policy initiatives of the elected government. For contemporary populist politicians, such as Donald Trump, the civil service is the "Deep State" that prevents them from governing as they would like (Moynihan, 2021; Swan, 2022).

In other types of political systems that fundamental assumption about the civil service may not have been valid for some time, if ever. In many countries, the civil service, even if selected by merit system, may not be the "best and brightest" that are assumed to be recruited to positions in the civil service system. When civil service salaries are low and not competitive with comparable positions in the private sector, then the government is unlikely to be able to recruit the type of talent required for effective governance (Brans and Peters, 2012; Hood, Peters and Lee, 2003). That the absence of adequate rewards for public office is also likely to de-motivate members of the civil service so that they are not the active, committed workers envisioned by the advocates of the civil service.

Given the concerns that politicians may have about the quality and loyalty of civil servants, whether those concerns are justified or not, all governments make political appointments in the public bureaucracy. Even those countries with well-functioning civil services do find it desirable to permit political executives to make some appointments in the bureaucracy. There are marked differences in the number of appointments that are made. For example, in the United States, the president and his colleagues in government can make over 4,000 appointments in the executive branch, while the prime minister in Canada has only several hundred positions at his or her disposal. Many governments in less-developed countries will have thousands of patronage positions available to the political leaders, and even if there is a civil service, its impact on public policy and governance may be minimal (see Brierly, 2020; Panizza et al., 2023).

By patronage appointments we mean the power of political actors to appoint individuals, using their own discretion, to nonelective positions in the public sector, irrespective of the legality of the decision (Kopecký et al., 2012; Panizza et al., 2019). This definition does not make assumptions about the motivations for the appointments, the roles played by appointees, their professional capabilities, the legality of their appointments, or about the impact of patronage appointments on the quality of public administration. Those characteristics of appointments differ across countries, or even among different appointments within the same country, and will be the subject of our comparative analysis. We are interested first in the number of appointments that are made and then concerned about their characteristics.

We are not, however, using patronage to mean political leaders using their powers to distribute benefits to voters or local brokers in order to win elections (see Kenny, 2017). This form of linkage is better described as clientelism (Stokes et al., 2013), or more generally "distributive politics" (Golden and Min, 2013). In this study, we are more concerned with the recruitment of individuals into posts within the government, many of which may be directly involved with making public policy.

This book is about patronage appointments in the bureaucracy in Asian countries. In the sample of countries included in the book, there are several countries with very well-developed civil service systems, with minimal levels of patronage (Japan, Singapore, and South Korea). There are also some countries that have a career civil service system but use patronage to assign employees to more or less desirable positions within the bureaucracy (Bangladesh and India). And in between those extremes are several countries with formal civil service systems that are heavily influenced by political parties and by social ties to society (Vietnam, Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia). Thus, within these countries, we have a wide range of cases, and we can use these cases to understand better the causes and consequences of patronage in the public sector. And in addition, patronage in these Asian countries can be compared with that found in other areas of the world.

1.1 The Nature of Contemporary Patronage

Before discussing the cases of patronage in Asian bureaucracies more specifically, we will make several more general comparative and theoretical points about patronage in contemporary governments. Asian governments reflect most of these characteristics but also have their own distinctive features that will be discussed later in this chapter. As is true for any study of comparative public administration and governance, we need to be concerned about both similarities and differences among the cases.

The first point to make here is the relationship between the concepts of patronage and politicization of the public service. As already noted, patronage refers specifically to the appointment of public officials by political leaders. Politicization is a more encompassing concept, referring to all attempts to impose political control over the public bureaucracy (Cooper, 2020; Peters and Pierre, 2004). Patronage is

clearly one such method for gaining control, but it is not the only one. For example, political leaders may employ methods such as moving perceived opponents out of key positions within agencies, or demotions of perceived enemies, to impose more control. And for countries such as China and Vietnam with a hegemonic political party, the link between politics and the bureaucracy is very direct and pervasive so that the bureaucracy is almost inherently politicized.

We should also differentiate patronage from clientelism, although the two terms are often used interchangeably. Like politicization, clientelism is a general concept concerning the relationship between political leaders – the patron – and his or her followers – the clients (Müller, 2017). In a clientelistic relationship, the patron exchanges favors, which could be jobs, for votes. But the favors distributed by the patron also may be more collective than personal, for example, public infrastructure.[1] Also, clientelism is generally not concerned with hiring people for upper-level jobs in government in order to improve governance, while patronage tends to focus on these managerial and advisory positions (but see Grindle, 2012). To the extent that clientelism is associated with patronage employment, it is generally for lower-level jobs in local governments.

The third point of reference for this research is that the level of patronage, and politicization, has been increasing in governments (Kopecký et al., 2012, 2016). The increases may be most noticeable in consolidated democracies where levels of patronage have been lower (Japan), but there has been some increase in many other countries as well. This increase has occurred despite attempts by some governments (see Dussauge-Laguna, 2022) to limit the amount of patronage, and the continuing pressures of international donor organizations that stress the importance of a career in civil service for effective governance and the rule of law. Governing is always political, but the process is more political and less expert in the early 2020s than it has been for some time.

Increasing levels of patronage have been driven by several factors. One has been the reaction to *New Public Management (NPM)*, and

[1] Ruhil and Camones (2003) argued that political machines that distributed public jobs in the United States died out when the politicians understood that it was less expensive and easier to distribute "pork barrel" projects than to distribute the jobs.

the sense among some political leaders that the public bureaucracy was becoming too autonomous from political control (Bach et al., 2018). The "presidentialization" of politics, with prime ministers consolidating their powers vis-à-vis cabinet and parliament (Poguntke and Webb, 2007), has been associated with those prime ministers building larger personal staffs through patronage appointments. Likewise, the increased partisanship of governments has led to attempts on the part of political parties to ensure their control over policy while in office, and with that the appointment of larger staffs. And finally, populism (Peters and Pierre, 2019) has been associated with distrust in the existing employees of government and a desire to replace them with more loyal representatives of "the people."

These causes for increased patronage may not be as powerful in Asia as they have been in other parts of the world. For example, although NPM did spread to Asia it was not taken up with the intensity or success as in many other countries (Kim and Han, 2015). Also, populism has not been an important political force in most of Asia, with the exception of India, the Philippines, and Indonesia (Kenny, 2017). And having strong political leaders is not particularly new in many Asian countries, although in some cases there has been an increasing centralization of power. Still, patronage is important in Asian governments and we will need to examine what factors differentiate Asian systems from other countries.

1.2 Why Do Governments Make Patronage Appointments?

The first question we need to answer is why do governments want to make patronage appointments? We have already implied the answer to that question, noting that political elites may question both the loyalty and the competence of the career civil service and will want to have their own people occupy key positions in government. That is the basic answer, but we need to consider more carefully the reasons that governments choose to go outside the civil service in order to fill positions in the public sector. And again the answers may vary across political systems, across policy domains, and across time.

The first reason for political leaders to want to make patronage appointments is that they want to be able to influence public policy and to ensure that the policies being adopted and implemented by the government correspond to their preferences. If those political leaders

do not believe that the career civil service is willing to take policy direction, or that the civil servants may have a policy agenda of their own, then making patronage appointments may be perceived as crucial for controlling policy.

In addition to controlling the direction of policy, patronage may be important for the quality of policymaking, especially in domains such as economic policy. Governments with low rates of compensation for the civil service, and especially those at the top of the civil service,[2] may not be able to hire the talented individuals they require to make good policies. However, individuals who would not accept a career in government may be willing to accept short-term positions, especially when they agree with the policy preferences of the incumbent leadership. Thus, patronage becomes a means of improving the quality of governance.

The second major reason for using patronage is political, or personal, loyalty. Most if not all political leaders want to be surrounded by staff who agree with their policies and politics. Patronage is the way to ensure that loyalty, as opposed to the willingness of career civil servants to serve any political master. In the eyes of politicians that willingness to serve may come with an absence of enthusiasm and at times even a tendency to shirk or sabotage the actions of a government (Brehm and Gates, 1999; Guedes-Neto and Peters, 2021). Therefore, a more committed employee is better for the politician. Further, that appointed individual may be able to do things that a member of a career public service cannot do legally.

1.3 A Typology of Patronage

Those two reasons for patronage appointments themselves have dimensions. First, the choice of a public servant for policy reasons may be matched by the selection of non-civil servants to perform other tasks. Those tasks may in some instances be illegal for a career public servant to perform, given their partisan political nature. These non-policy jobs still require skills, and they may be skills that are not found

[2] In most civil service systems, compensation at the bottom of the system is better relative to that in the private market than it is in the top-level positions. It therefore may be more difficult to recruit good senior officials for a long career, although many such employees remain in office because of "Public Service Motivation" (Vandenabeele et al., 2014).

in great abundance in the career of public service. Thus, politicians are seeking different skill sets at times, but they are still seeking skills that they cannot readily acquire within the career bureaucracy.

Within the loyalty justification of making patronage appointments, there are three subsets of reasons for making appointments. One subset reflects the loyalty that a public employee may have to a political party. A good deal of patronage within government involves giving jobs to individuals because they are members of the political party in office. In coalition governments, this will mean distributing positions among members of all the parties in the coalition. These people may have substantive policy skills or they may have more political skills, but the reason they have a job is their membership in, or at least loyalty to, a party. In one-party states, this partisan reason for appointments is crucial, and at times may make distinguishing merit and patronage appointments difficult (Jiang, 2018).

Another variety of loyalty that may be involved in patronage appointments is personal loyalty to a politician. A political leader may want his or her "cronies" in an office with him or her. Some political systems facilitate the use of personal loyalty by permitting ministers to appoint *cabinets* of advisors paid for by public funds (Eymeri-Douzans and Bioy, 2015). These appointees may be members of the political party but many will be personally committed to the political leader. Or the appointment of the friends of the political leader may be less systematized, with appointment opportunities created more on an ad hoc basis.

The third foundation for loyalty is to a social group. In societies where familial groupings, such as clans, tribes, ethnic groups, or even just extended families, are important in society and in politics then individuals may be appointed to government on the basis of that affiliation (Berenschot, 2018; Wedel, 2003). Still, in other cases, socioeconomic groups such as labor unions may be important in making appointments. When ethnicity or family is the foundation for an appointment, this may be done to reinforce the dominance of one group in government, or it could also be done to attempt to make the government more representative of the society as a whole.[3] In either case, the individuals appointed to office will be expected to defend

[3] In post-conflict societies, the elite pacts used to terminate the conflict often involve this type of representativeness in government.

the interests of their group, and also ensure that the public policies adopted also respect those interests.

There are also two subsets within the types of tasks being performed by patronage appointees in government. As mentioned earlier, we have emphasized the policy-making role of appointees, and those functions are certainly important. But some patronage appointments may be in public office to perform more political roles, whether for the political party or for the individual leader. When there are strong, programmatic political parties, patronage appointments can be made to ensure that the government is implementing the policy preferences of the party. And appointees who are loyal to the individual leader may be there to provide direction to other employees in government (especially career civil servants).

Having these two dimensions and their subsets in mind, we can construct a typology of patronage positions (see Panizza et al., 2019 for the original version of this typology). One dimension of this 2 × 3 typology is the role played by the appointee – policy or political. The other dimension is the basis of the loyalty of the appointee – personal, partisan, or group. Each of these six cells then contains particular types of public employees. Not every country with a patronage system of a certain variety will necessarily have all of these types of appointees, but these do provide some idea of the range of patronage officials that can be operating in those governments.

Cell A of our typology contains patronage appointees who have been put into office because of their policy skills and their loyalty to a political party. We can refer to those appointees as "party professionals." They not only have strong professional skills but also are committed to a political party, and will only use those skills in government when their party is in power. They are thus similar to the participants in the "government of strangers" in the United States described by Hugh Heclo (1977). When their party is out of office they typically will work in the private sector, in universities, or in think tanks, and may come in and out of government several times during their career. When working in one-party dominant political systems their time in office may be linked to a faction of the party, and they may be in more lucrative jobs in the private sector for most of their career.

Table 1.1 *Typology of types of patronage*

		Major role of appointees	
		Policy	Politics
Basis of Trust	Party	A Party professionals	B Apparatchiks
	Personal	C Programmatic technocrats	D Political agents
	Group	E Group experts	F Social liaisons

Based on Panizza et al. (2019).

In Cell B of our typology, we find "apparatchiks." There are individuals appointed because of their loyalty to the party, and who are responsible for political tasks within the public sector. There are various subtypes of this group mentioned in Cell B, but there are two basic functions that they perform. One of these functions is to enforce control by the party over the lower echelons of government, and in some cases (especially one-party states) even over ministers. Their other job, especially in coalition governments, is to make political deals with other ministries and other parties. These deals may be done to produce better, more coordinated governance but they may also be just about maintaining political power.

Rather than being loyal to a political party, patronage appointees in Cells C and D are loyal to, and trusted by, individuals within the government, usually a minister or the chief executive. Some of these, the "programmatic technocrats" found in Cell C, are experts in a policy domain who are willing to join the government to assist their friends in making better policies. Given their level of expertise and their opportunities in the private sector, they tend to remain in government for relatively short periods of time, but also may come and go many times depending upon changes in government., The "political agents" occupying Cell D provide political support to the political leader in a variety of ways, as mentioned in Table 1.1 (see the case of occupants of positions such as ministerial *cabinets* (Eymeri-Douzans et al., 2015), it may be difficult to distinguish the political from the professional roles of these appointees.

The occupants of Cells E and F are somewhat more difficult to specify than those found in the other four cells. They are all related to social actors in some ways, but those linkages and their role in shaping appointments may vary substantially. Our research in Latin America (Panizza et al., 2019, 2023) has identified relatively few patronage appointments of this type, but they do appear to be more prevalent in some Asian countries, especially in Central Asia. If these positions within government are granted by virtue of membership in social groups such as ethnic groups, families, or clans, then this version of patronage can be seen as enhancing the representative nature of bureaucracy.

In Cell E, we may find experts in policy domains, such as labor market policy who have been appointed at the suggestion of unions. There might also be individuals in these positions working to protect the rights and interests of traditional segments of society, or as means of co-opting members of ethnic groups into supporting the existing government.[4] These officials may, for example, be employed in cultural or educational organizations to foster minority group cultures In other cases these appointments may not be so technocratic, but rather lower-level professional jobs,[5] or even menial jobs, given to members because of their membership in a group, whether an organization or a segment of society.

Cell F may be occupied by individuals whose appointments might be more similar to clientelism than the type of patronage discussed in the remainder of this paper. They too will be representing the interests of their group, and be somewhat like the appointees in Cell D who are providing political services to the leaders, albeit for social rather than partisan reasons. In political systems in which group membership is defining attribute, the opportunity, or virtual necessity, for a leader to employ members of his or her group will explain the importance of employment in Cell F. Hutchcroft (2014) refers to these relationships

[4] This Cell E comes close to being an analog of "representative bureaucracy," in which individuals are selected for government positions on the basis of gender or ethnicity, In the active conception of representative bureaucracy those individuals are expected to use their position to advance the interest of the group being represented (Selden, 1997).

[5] One example of this type of employment in our research in Latin America was the control of employment as teachers by the teachers union in Mexico (see Dussauge-Laguna, forthcoming).